

# CHAPTER 10

## THE DOWNTOWN TROY HISTORIC DISTRICT



**The Public Square**



## INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Troy Historic District is an important part of the Troy community. The Public Square is also one of the most recognizable places in the entire Miami Valley region. Serving the daily needs of Troy's residents, Downtown Troy also serves as a local attraction for visitors from out-of-town. Not only does the District serve residential needs, but it also provides a place for businesses to operate.

A historic district is typically defined as an ensemble of buildings and their surroundings given a designation due to their significance as a whole, a geographically definable area possessing a significant contribution, linkage or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, and/or objects united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development. Preservation of these historic areas and/or structures is of vital importance to the long-term health of a community. These areas connect a city's past with its present. They also link the works of previous centuries with those of today. No community should allow these historic places to disappear. Neglect, random demolitions, and inappropriate renovations can ultimately damage a historic district's identity and its ultimate value. Preservation of individual buildings can help combat problems by stabilizing neighborhoods, providing affordable housing, stimulating private investment, attracting people and businesses back downtown, and attracting tourists to the area.

A historic district also represents a collective past of history, government, residential, and social gathering spots in a city. This is true for the Downtown Troy Historic District and especially true for the Public Square, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Troy possesses an impressive stock of historic buildings and/or properties. All of these structures/areas could be considered to have historical significance as evaluated by the National Register of Historic Places, Ohio Historical Society, or locally established criteria. The diversity among the different buildings constructed in different eras is what gives Troy its unique, eclectic look. The Downtown Troy Historic District's building stock dates back as far as the first third of the nineteenth century, over a hundred and fifty years ago.

Many more new and recent structures exist that also contribute to Troy's character. A number of vacant or underutilized sites offer the potential for a significant amount of future new construction projects within the district. Improvements to one building within the District inevitably contribute to the overall enhancement to the street character. Incremental maintenance and design improvements made to individual buildings will ultimately improve the District as a whole and the public's perception of the area as a vital and desirable place to grow.

The City of Troy has made significant investments in revitalizing the Downtown Troy Historic District. These have included routine public works projects such as street repair, but have also included major projects such as the renovation of the Municipal

Building, construction of a new Police Headquarters, and the Downtown Streetscape projects. A special Downtown Building Repair Loan Program has helped encourage private owners of buildings to make new investments in improving their buildings also. The Miami County government has also contributed through a major renovation of one of Downtown Troy's most visible structures, the Miami County Courthouse.

New ideas and revitalization programs are still being considered. A third phase of the Downtown Streetscape could extend the sidewalk design and amenities another block out from the Public Square. Nearby residential neighborhoods are benefiting from additional attention, including systematic implementation of a sidewalk repair program and updated storm drain installations.

City Council has also provided solid, on-going support to the Troy Main Street program and has encouraged the reforming of the Downtown Troy Business Association. The Mayor's Office also convenes a monthly meeting to review Downtown Troy programs, projects, and ideas. In 2000, City Council adopted the 2000-2001 Downtown Development Plan as part of a new Downtown Troy Revitalization effort. A copy of that plan is included in the Appendices to this Comprehensive Plan.

Figure 10-1 at the end of this chapter shows the outline of the current Historical District for the City of Troy.

## **HISTORIC DISTRICT REGULATIONS**

Beyond supporting programs and making investments, local government can also adopt regulations that work to encourage historic district revitalization. The City of Troy adopted its first historic district regulations in the 1970s. These have been vital in helping to discourage demolition of historic buildings and encouragement of renovations that fit the overall historic environment.

The preamble of the Downtown Troy Historic District Ordinance states "the public interest calls for the preservation and protection of significant architectural and archeological resources from Troy's and America's histories that lie within the city. Buildings and places, which tell of the presence of our forefathers, add meaning and livability to a city as do handsome residential areas and orderly business districts. To accomplish this, it is necessary to provide a method whereby, with careful consideration for the rights of private property and only after thorough analysis of the objectives to be achieved, certain public controls are required for changes made to meaningful buildings and/or neighborhoods".

The City of Troy Zoning Code has an extensive section that sets out the historic protection regulations. All new construction or demolition must be presented for prior review by the Planning Commission. In reviewing individual proposals, the Planning Commission has considered the way the changes fit the specific building's architecture, and how the changes might affect the general streetscape. Some projects have been

approved with little or no change, while for others, revised plans were recommended. In a few cases, approval has been denied.

## **NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

Having a building, site, or district placed on the National Register of Historic Places is an honor. The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of historic properties recognized by the federal government as worthy of preservation for their local, state, or national significance.

Districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, or culture may qualify for listing on the National Register. The sites, buildings, etc., must be at least fifty years old and must possess integrity in their location, design, setting, materials, craftsmanship, feeling, and association. In addition to the above, the site must meet one of the following criteria:

- Associated with historically significant events;
- Associated with the lives of significant persons;
- Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or are associated with the work of a master, possess high artistic value, or represent a significant and distinguishable entity; and
- Have or may yield information important to prehistory or history.

A listing on the National Register accords a certain prestige to property owners and the locality in which it is placed. It also raises the community's awareness of such structures and their pride. One problem is that a National Register listing does not prevent the owner of the listed property from remodeling, repairing, altering, selling, or demolishing the property, as long as only private funds are used. Listing also does not obligate the owner to make any repairs or improvements to the property. Enforceable rules and regulations to protect historic resources must come from state and local levels. As mentioned above, the City of Troy has adopted a historic district ordinance for this purpose.

The City of Troy has several properties that are included in the National Register of Historic places. These include the Troy Public Square, which is listed as a whole versus the buildings being listed individually. The downtown core contains numerous other individually designated buildings. Another district that has been added recently is the Hobart Steel Hose District, along Hobart Circle.